

# *Sri Krishna Kathamrita*



## *Bindu*

**Issue 587**

*vaiṣṇava-sevā-mahimā*

***The Glories of Service to the Vaishnavas, part 2***





# Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

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Inscription in Hampi. Photo by Borayin Maitreya Larios

## RENDERING SERVICE TO DEVOTEES

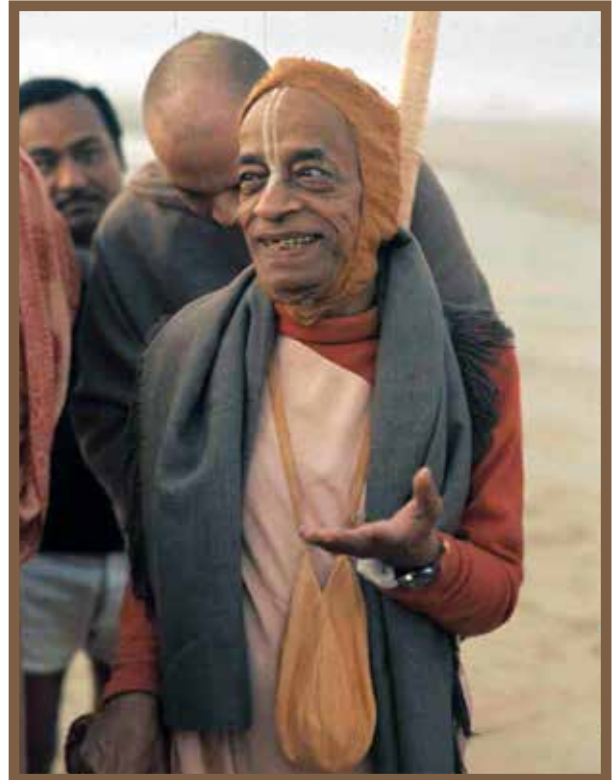


His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, there is a nice statement praising the service of the *vaiṣṇavas*, or devotees. In that scripture, Lord Shiva tells Parvati, “My dear Parvati, there are different methods of worship, and out of all such methods, the worship of the Supreme Person is considered to be the highest. But even higher than the worship of the Lord is the worship of the Lord’s devotees.”

A similar statement is in the third canto, seventh chapter, verse 19, of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: “Let me become a sincere servant of the devotees, because by serving them one can achieve unalloyed devotional



Unknown photographer.

Cover: Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu offers respect to his guru Gangadas Pandit. By Kartick Biswas. Part of the “Bengali School” of the early 20th century.



Unknown photographer.



*Srila Prabhupada watches the devotees take prasādam at the home of Baghubai Jariwala in Surat in December of 1970*

service unto the lotus feet of the Lord. The service of devotees diminishes all miserable material conditions and develops within one a deep devotional love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

... In the *Ādi Purāṇa* there is the following statement by Lord Krishna himself, addressed to Arjuna: “My dear Partha, one who claims to be my devotee is not so. Only a person who claims to be the devotee of my devotee is actually my devotee.” No one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly [Cc. *madhya* 13.80]. One must approach him through his pure devotees. Therefore, in the system of *vaiṣṇava* activities, the first duty is to accept a devotee as spiritual master and then to render service unto him. (from chapter 12 of *Nectar of Devotion*)

Prahlad Maharaja does not say, “My Lord, Nrisimhadev, I am now so competent. Give me your service directly.” He says, *tava bhṛtya-sevām* — “First of all give me the opportunity to serve your servant.” This is *vaiṣṇavism* [Bhāg. 7.9.28].

Why is it required to serve a *vaiṣṇava*? If you want to get relief from this conditional life, then you have to serve a *vaiṣṇava*. *chādiyā vaiṣṇava sevā, nistāra payeche keba* — “Who can get liberty from the entanglement of material existence if they do not serve a pure *vaiṣṇava*?” [unknown source, usually ascribed to Srila Narottam Das Thakur]. *mahat-sevāṁ dvāram āhur vimukteḥ* — “If you want liberation from

material entanglement, then you must take to service to great souls.” [Bhāg. 5.5.2] You must. There is no alternative. *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam* — “If you are actually interested to inquire about transcendental subject matter, you must accept a guru.” [Bhāg. 11.3.21].



Unknown photographer.

*Srutakirti Prabhu gives Srila Prabhupada a massage at Bhaktivedanta Manor in August of 1973*



Young Saraswati offers a garland to Srila Prabhupada

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth. [Bg. 4.34]

These are the ways. You cannot understand Krishna by your erudite scholarship. It is not possible. If that were the case, then Krishna would have instructed *Bhagavad-gītā* to a great *Vedāntist*. No. Krishna found Arjuna. What was Arjuna? Arjuna was a *gr̥hastha*. Arjuna was a *kṣatriya*, an ordinary soldier. A soldier is not expected to become a *Vedāntist*. We recruit soldiers not from the *Vedāntists'* group. One who can fight, who has strength — we recruit as a soldier. So Arjuna was not very qualified in that way to understand *Bhagavad-gītā*, but Krishna said, “Yes, I will speak to you.”

“Why to me?” *Bhakto 'si priyo 'si me* — “Because you are my dear devotee. [Bg. 4.3]” By scholarship one cannot understand *Bhagavad-gītā*. That is not possible. One must become a servant of the servant of Krishna [Cc. *madhya* 13.80]. Then one can understand

*Bhagavad-gītā*. Otherwise, it is not possible. (From a lecture in Mayapur, 6 March 1976.) 🍌

## VAISHNAVA SEVA AND CHANTING



### Statements by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Although service to Krishna, service to devotees, and chanting the holy name are three different activities, the purpose of all three of them is one.

*nāma saṅkīrtanera dvāra kṛṣṇa o kārṣṇa-sevā haya  
vaiṣṇavera sevā karile kṛṣṇa kīrtana o kṛṣṇa-sevā haya  
kṛṣṇa-sevā karilei nāma-saṅkīrtana vaiṣṇava-sevā haya  
tāhāra pramāṇa ei — sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ vasudeva-śabditaṁ*  
Through *nāma-saṅkīrtana* one serves both Krishna and his devotees; by serving *vaiṣṇavas* one performs both *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* and *kṛṣṇa-sevā*; and by *kṛṣṇa-sevā* both *nāmasaṅkīrtana* and *vaiṣṇava-sevā* are effected. The proof of this statement is *sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ vasudeva-śabditaṁ*: “Worshiping Vāsudev is enacted on the platform of pure goodness” [Bhāg. 4.3.23].





Unknown photographers

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada and some of his sannyāsa disciples. Bhakti Vivek Bharati Goswami in the center behind Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. Third from the right is Bon Maharaja.*

(From a letter cited in Vol. 1, part 2, chapter 28 of *Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava*. By Bhakti Vikasa Swami. Bhakti Vikasa Trust. Surat, India. 2009.)

**Question:** How important is *vaiṣṇava sevā* to those who wish to chant purely?

**Srila Bhaktisiddhanta:** People should not make a show of worshiping the Lord while remaining averse to serving devotees living in the *maṭha* [temple]. A *maṭha* contains all the ingredients for the Lord's service. Simply by serving the *maṭha*'s residents, we become qualified to chant the holy name. That is, our taste for chanting will increase. If instead we remain absorbed in serving materialistic relatives, we will never learn to chant Hari's holy name. If we remain busy in the service of family members while remaining indifferent to serving Hari, guru, and the *vaiṣṇavas*, we will never become inclined toward chanting. 🍌

(Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. *Amṛta Vāṇī*. 9.30. A collection of statements from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Originally compiled in Bengali by Sri Bhakti Bhagavat Mayukha Maharaja. Translated into English by Bhumiapati Das. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004.)

**YOUR DUTY  
IS TO SERVE  
THE VAISHNAVAS**



**Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja**

The villagers of Kuliya village once asked Mahaprabhu, "What is our duty?" Mahaprabhu replied, *vaiṣṇava-sevana nirantara kara kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* — "Serve the *vaiṣṇavas*, and without cessation chant the name of Krishna." [Cc. *madhya* 15.104] That is your duty. If you serve *vaiṣṇavas*, dear devotees of Krishna who preach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the world, who inculcate Krishna consciousness unto others, meaning inculcating real life unto those who are dying — they are *vaiṣṇavas*. If you serve them, thereby Krishna is worshiped. You cannot see Krishna. But you can see his dear devotees, who are *anugrahāyeha caranti nūnam bhūtāni bhavyāni janārdanasya* — who have descended from the spiritual world and





Unknown artist

*The gopīs are Krishna's topmost devotees*

are wandering about here to inculcate Krishna consciousness unto those who are suffering due to a lack of Krishna consciousness.” [Bhāg. 3.5.3] If you render service to such *vaiṣṇavas*, thereby Krishna is worshiped. Because they carry Krishna with them, they will give you Krishna. That is life. Then your life will be successful. Always chant *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma*

*hare hare*. That is Mahāprabhu’s instruction. How can you worship Krishna? By serving such a dear devotee of Krishna who preaches the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the world. Such a person saves the dying human beings, inculcates Krishna consciousness unto them, and gives them life. 🌸

— From a talk on 21 January 1996. Accra, Ghana. On the inauguration of Srila Prabhupada’s centennial festival.





Unknown artists. Early Bengali school. Mid 19th century.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his associates doing public kīrtana

### THE DEVOTEES PRAY FOR MAHAPRABHU TO GET BHAKTI



#### From Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata ādi chapter 12

“hena kara kṛṣṇa—jagannāthera nandana  
to’ra rase matta hau, chāḍi’ anya-mana

“[The vaiṣṇavas of Nabadwip began to pray:] O Krishna, please let the son of Jagannath Mishra become absorbed in you without deviation! (43)

bhakta āśīrvāda prabhu śire kari’ laya  
bhakta-āśīrvāde se kṛṣṇete bhakti haya

The Lord accepted the devotees’ blessings on his head, for devotional service to Lord Krishna is attained only by the blessings of devotees. (46)

tumi saba yā’ra kara śubhānusandhāna  
mora citte hena laya, sei bhāgyavān

“I sincerely feel that one who is blessed by all of you is most fortunate. (51)

kata-dina paḍāiyā, mora citte āche  
calimu bujhiyā bhāla vaiṣṇavera kāche”

“I’ve already decided that after teaching a while longer, I will go serve a pure devotee.” (52) 🍌

### GAURA SERVES THE DEVOTEES AT THE GANGA



#### From Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata madhya chapter 2

tomā sabā sevile se kṛṣṇa-bhakti pāi”  
eta bali’ kāro pāye dhare sei ṭhāni

“I can have devotion to Krishna only by serving you.”  
Saying this, the Lord caught hold of their feet. (43)

niñāḍaye vastra kāro kariyā yatane  
dhuti-vastra tuli’ kāro dena ta’ āpane

He carefully wrung out the water from someone’s wet cloth and handed someone else his dhotī. (44)

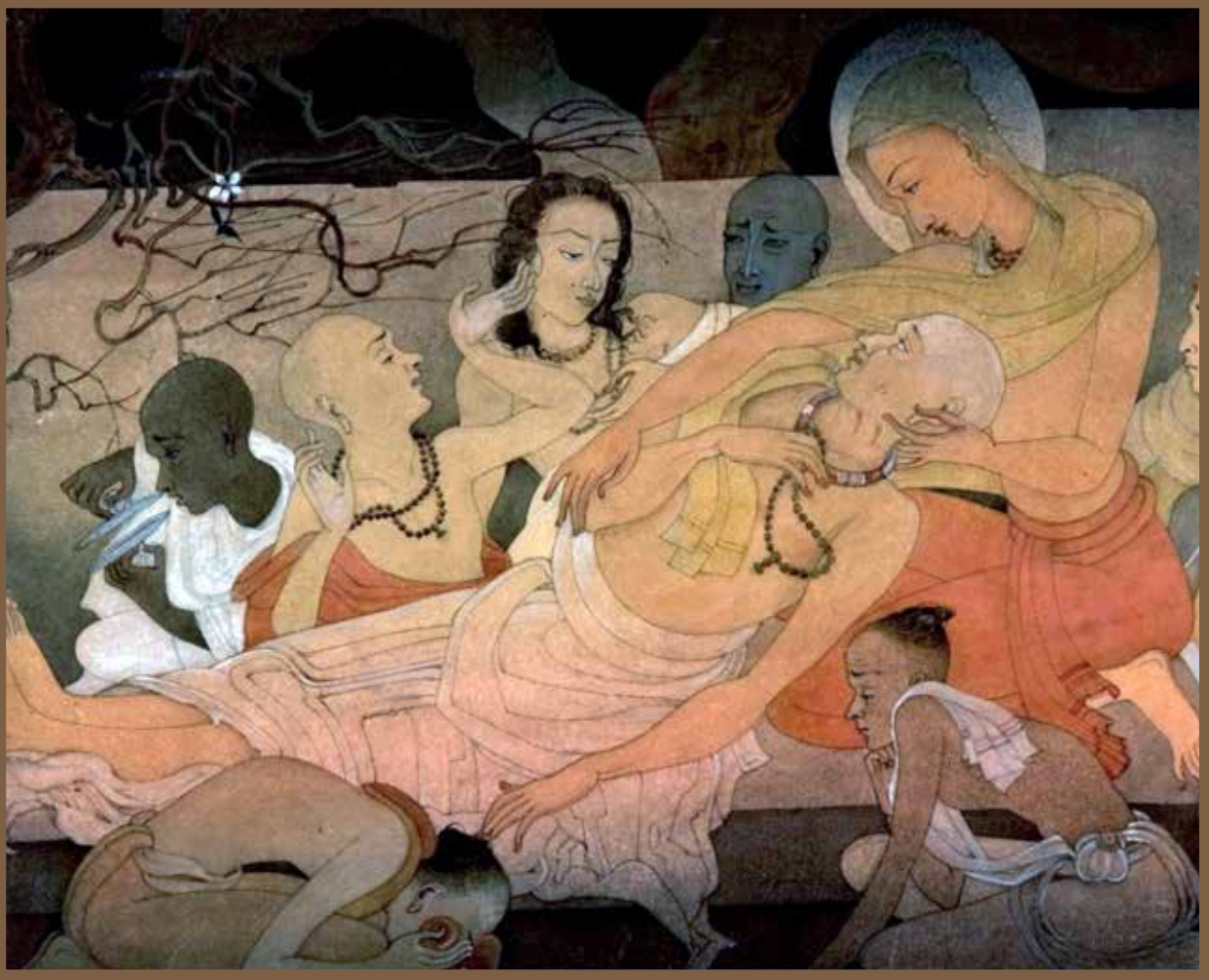
kuśa gaṅgā-mṛttikā kāhāro dena kare  
sāji vahi’ kona dina cale kāro ghare

He collected kuśa grass and clay from the Ganges for someone, and sometimes he carried a basket of flowers home for someone. (45)

sakala vaiṣṇava-gaṇa ‘hāya hāya’ kare’  
“ki kara, ki kara?” tabu kare’ viśvambhare

Although all the vaiṣṇavas fervently requested him to refrain from such activities, saying, “What are you doing?” Vishwambhar [the name of Lord Chaitanya in his youth] continued to serve them. (46)

Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. West Bengal c 1915.



### The disappearance of Srila Haridas Thakur

*ei-mata prati-dina prabhu viśvambhara  
āpana-dāsera haya āpane kinkara  
kon karma sevakera prabhu nāhi kare’?  
sevakera lāgi’ nija-dharma parihare’*

In this way Lord Vishwambhar daily acted as the servant of his own servants. What service is there that the Lord will not do for his devotees? The Lord gives up his own position for the sake of his servants. (47-48)

*kṛṣṇera karaye sevābhaktera svabhāva  
bhakta lāgi’ kṛṣṇera sakala-anubhāva*

It is the nature of the devotees to serve Lord Krishna, and whatever Krishna does is for the sake of his devotees. (51) 🍌

— Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata with commentary of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. English translation by Bhumipati Das. Edited and published by Pundarik Vidyanidhi Das. Vrajraj Press. Vrindavan. 2001.

### DARSHAN THROUGH VAISHNAVA SEVA



**From the commentary by Priyadas on text  
122 of the Bhaktamāla by Sri Nabha Das**

For information about Sri Nabha Das and his book Bhaktamāla, see Bindu issue 586.

In the family of Sri Khemalaratna Rathor appeared a pious and devoted son named Sri Haridas. He was a leading devotee of the Supreme Lord and his servants. He was like a reservoir of devotional sentiments. His faith in the Lord was firm and his heart was very pure, like the water of the Ganga. He was an unalloyed devotee who fully utilized his mind, words, and actions in the service of the Lord. He perfectly followed the procedures of worship of the Rāmāyaṇa.



He considered the mercy and prowess of the spiritual master to be equal to the mercy and prowess of the Supreme Lord. Just as the ocean swells upon seeing the full moon in the *śarat* season (autumn), Sri Haridas's heart swelled with joy by seeing the devotees of the Supreme Lord.

Haridas was very fond of serving the devotees. Once, in his absence, a group of *vaiṣṇavas* arrived at his house. They were greeted and served very nicely and finally departed. When Sri Haridas returned home and could not see the devotees, he became very sad and ran behind them to have their *darśana*. Seeing his eagerness and his love for the devotees, the Lord appeared before him in

## THE HIGHEST BENEDICTION

*Comments by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta  
Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada  
on Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's  
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata ādi 1.8*

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.10) states, *tasmād ātma-jñāṁ hy arcayed bhūti-kāmaḥ* — “By worshipping the devotees of the Lord, all one's desires will be fulfilled.” Baladeva Vidyabhushan has written in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* (3.3.51), *ātma-jñāṁ bhagavat-tattva-jñāṁ tad bhaktam ity arthaḥ; bhūti-kāmo mokṣa-paryanta-sampatti-lipsur ity arthaḥ*. In other words, if one wants the highest benediction, he should serve the devotees of the Lord.

In Madhvacharya's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* (3.3.47), he quotes the following from the *Poṣāyaṇa-śrūti*: *tānupāsava tānupacarasva tebhyaḥ śṛṇu hi te tāmavantu* — “Worship the devotees of the Lord, serve the devotees of the Lord, and hear from the devotees of the Lord, for they will protect you.”

— Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata with commentary of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. English translation by Bhumipati Das. Edited and published by Pundarik Vidyanidhi Das. Vrajaraj Press. Vrindavan. 2001.



Unknown artist. Pahari School. Guler Style. Circa 1750

### Two lady devotees worship Tulasi

the form of a devotee and asked Haridas, “Where are you going?”

Sri Haridas replied, “I am looking for the devotees who had come to my house while I was away.”

The Lord dressed as a devotee said, “Simply have my *darśana* and then you will automatically receive the benefit of seeing the devotees.”

Haridas replied, “Can you glorify the Lord as the devotees do? Can you honor *prasāda* like them?”

The Lord replied, “Yes!” The Lord then performed *kīrtana* in such a way that it was as if thousands of devotees were performing *kīrtana*. Sri Haridas took him to his house and fed him sumptuous *prasāda*. The Lord in the guise of a devotee ate everything that had been cooked. Sri Haridas thus came to understand that this person was none other than his beloved Lord, appearing in the form of a devotee. Thereafter, the Lord gave Haridas his *darśana* in his original form, thus making his life successful. 🍌

— Nabha Goswami with commentary by Priyadas. *Bhaktamāla*. English translation by Bhumipati Das. Edited by Purnaprajna Das. Rasbiharilal & Sons. Vrindaban. 2017.

Unknown artist, Uttar Pradesh, Circa 1870



During the first manvantara of this Brahma kalpa, a demon named Hayagriva stole the Vedas from Brahma. Lord Matsya then killed the demon, recovered the Vedas, and delivered his devotees.

## THE SOURCE OF KRISHNA'S REPUTATION

**Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 4.21.38**

brahmanya-devaḥ puruṣaḥ purātano  
nityaṁ harir yac-caraṇābhivandanāt  
avāpa lakṣmīm anapāyinīm yaśo  
jagat-pavitram ca mahattamāgraṇīḥ

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ancient, eternal Godhead, who is foremost amongst all great personalities, obtained the opulence of his staunch reputation, which purifies the entire universe, by worshiping the lotus feet of the Brahmins and *vaiṣṇavas*.



## CLOSING THOUGHTS THE LORD WHO SERVES HIS DEVOTEES



Sri Krishna is famous as *asamordhva* — no one is equal to or greater than him. He is *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* — the supreme cause of all causes. Yet, paradoxically, that same supreme person gets pleasure by becoming subordinate to his dear devotee and even serving his devotee. Text two hundred and forty-four of the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra* states that one of the Lord's names is *Sadhu*. The learned scholar Sri Srinivasaraja Ramanuja Dhasan of the *Śrī-sampradāya* explains the meaning as follows:

Since Bhagavan happily accepts and accomplishes the tasks trusted to him by his dear devotees such as being a messenger, charioteer, etc., he is called '*sādhuh*' — the one who acts according to his devotees' wishes.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.86.59 addresses Krishna as *bhagavān bhakta-bhaktimān* — or the Lord who is devoted to his devotees. Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Maharaja once





Unknown artist. Probably Guler, Punjab hills circa 1810-20.

### *Krishna rescues his father Nanda Maharaja from the servants of Varuna*

commented, “Krishna is known as *bhakta-bhaktimān*. While the *bhakta*, devotee, is known as *bhāgavat-bhaktimān*. Krishna is always seeking an opportunity how to serve his pure devotee. It is said that Krishna secretly follows his pure devotee to take some dust of his lotus feet.” (From a lecture in Bhubaneswar on 10 June 1990.)

Krishna carries the shoes of Nanda Maharaja. He dances like a puppet for the pleasure of the elderly *gopīs* of Vraja. Sometimes he combs and decorates Srimati Radharani’s hair. He acts as the insignificant messenger of his devotees the Pandavas by taking a message to Duryodhan in Kurukshetra. In his purport to *Bhāg* 4.21.14, Srila Prabhupada comments that to serve Yudhisthir Maharaja at the time of the *rājasūya-yajña*, Krishna took charge of washing the feet of the guests. Krishna is also famous as Partha-sarathi, the chariot driver of Arjuna. One may think, “Oh that’s nice, he drove Arjuna’s chariot,” and leave it at that. Yet we might consider how in the middle

of the endless cacophony of a fierce battle with elephants screaming, powerful divine *astras* being fired, and men dying, a warrior is able to communicate instructions to his chariot driver when to turn right or left, etc. The tradition is that the warrior would keep his feet on the shoulders of the driver. By pushing down with his right or left foot, the driver would tell which direction to go. Understanding that, we can see something of the service attitude Krishna has for his dear devotees.

Considering the dedication Krishna shows to his devotees, it is no wonder that Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan has explained in his *Prameya-ratnāvalī* (7.3a), *deva-bhāvena sat-sevā. yathā taittirīyake, ‘atithi-devo bhava. iti.’*

“One should serve the devotees, considering them equal to the Supreme Personality of Godhead himself, as described in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (1.10), ‘One should serve the devotee in the same way as one serves the Supreme Personality of Godhead himself.’” 🍌 — MDas.



Painting by B. K. Mitra. Gita Press, Gorakhpur. Circa 1960s.

*Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu saved his devotees from the wrath of the Chand Kazi*



## READER'S LETTERS TO BINDU

**Regarding issue 586 The Glories of Vaishnava Seva:**

Thank you for this priceless jewel, Krishna Kathamrita Bindu. I just finished reading it cover to cover in the last couple of hours. I especially liked the following:

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1. [The stress on] *Nāma-parāyaṇa bhaktas'* *prasāda-sevā* [serving *prasāda* to devotees who are taking shelter of the holy name] rather than feeding persons in the name of *vaiṣṇava-sevā*.
2. The heartrending pastime of Lord Krishna becoming a servant at the home of Trilochan to serve devotees.
3. The verses that illustrate the importance of *vaiṣṇava-sevā* over *kṛṣṇa-sevā*.

Your sharing KK Bindu with us by email shows your generous and big heart following in the footsteps of your spiritual master. I am ever grateful to him and you for nourishing my parched heart with *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and *bhakti-rasa*.  
-- Radheshyam Das. Pune, India.

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**Letters may be edited for clarity and length.**

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